

# Strafford Energy & Climate Committee (SECC) Meeting Minutes

4/14/20

7:00 PM

Online Video Conference

**Meeting called by:** Doc Bagley

**Type of meeting:** SEC meeting

**Facilitator:** Doc Bagley

**Note taker:** Jim, transcribed from video session

**Attendees:** Doc Bagley, Kevin Grady, Matt Christie, Susan Hodges, Gus Speth, Gayle Giovanna, Barbara Smith

**Next Meeting:** May 12, 2020, 7 pm

## Minutes

### Action Items from this meeting:

**5. ACTION ITEM: Susan** said that the Climate Action Group will meet next Monday, and she will propose that they do a summary letter with numbers and details for the climate bills passed in the House so the Energy Committee can help circulate this, urging people to contact Senate President Pro Tem Tim Ashe and other Senators, asking for their support when the legislature reconvenes later in the summer.

**11. ACTION ITEM: Doc** will share the results. of this survey with an invitation to the Energy Committee's GoogleDrive.

1. **Minutes:** Review minutes from March. Approved.

2. **ACTION ITEMS** from previous meeting:

\* The **state is looking for a municipality to partner with**, for reviewing carbon impacts in a town forest. Doc called David Paganelli, who recommended that he talk to Michael Snyder, who is Commissioner of Vermont's Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative. Doc will follow up.

\* Susan provided Doc with the most recently dated version of **Climate Resolution FAQ**, and Doc asked Lisa to post this with the Energy Committee documents on our page of the town's website, but this still needs to be done: <https://unitedchurchofstrafford.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/climate-resolution-faqs-2-14-20-2.pdf>

\* We had discussed "Reach" or "Stretch" **building codes** that are higher than state requires, and Matt offered to look into current codes so that we could create a **packet of information to give to zoning administrator Brian Johnson** for distribution to people applying for building permits; we could ask the Selectboard to adopt a set of standards. Matt's report: Vermont code has just changed; previously was very vague, but is now much more assertive in terms of requirements for the person in Brian Johnston's position to do inspections for energy efficiency and conservation measures, with top-of-the-nation standards for appliances. Matt will follow up to explain the new standards to Brian, which probably means linking him to regional and state resources for training (possibly from the regional energy coordinator). The new standards are stringent enough that going for "Reach" codes doesn't seem justified to Matt.

\* With respect to the proposed **name change for our committee to the Strafford Energy and Climate Change Committee**: Doc wrote to Clerk Lisa Bragg with information about his research on this, which confirmed that other towns/cities have comparable names, for instance Burlington calls their committee "Volunteer Energy and Climate Committee," and Vershire's is the "Climate Action Committee." There are other energy committees going by "Sustainability Group," Energy Task Force," "Energy Focus Group," and so on. Doc explained that we are very interested in adding "Climate" to our committee name because this is more encompassing to our mission of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. The Select Board gave us a green light for this change a

while back when Doc met with them in 2019. Lisa will go back to the Select Board at their next meeting and confirm that this change is all right with them.

### Agenda Items:

1. **New chair:** Kevin is becoming the chair of the committee and will take over at the end of this meeting. Thanks to Doc for chairing the committee for 28 months! Doc will continue as a member on the committee and will focus on weatherization, Efficiency Vermont, Capstone, ButtonUp, and WindowDressers.
2. **Gayle Giovanna, on Biochar:** Gayle reported on her visit to a Shana Hanson's 3 Streams Farm in Belfast, Maine (<https://3streamsfarmbelfastme.blogspot.com/p/20.html>), to learn about a technique for using wood waste from pruning and other sources to create "bio-char," which can be used as a filter for agricultural runoff, which charges the material with nutrients, and then as a fertilizer. This is a pyrolytic process: excluding oxygen while burning, with slow combustion and not all the way to ash; when starts to turn to ash, you put water on the fire. This method requires no kiln or other equipment. Gayle is going to do a local demonstration here. There is some question about how much this gives off in the way of emissions; possibly no more than a brush pile, but with a final product that locks up 40% of the carbon for a long time. Kevin asked if there is an organization in our area doing bio-char applications, and Gayle mentioned Green State Biochar (<https://greenworksvermont.org/members/green-state-biochar-donna-pion/>), which apparently has a contract with the state to develop filtering for Lake Champlain runoff.
3. **Pocket Park report:** Saved for next meeting.
4. **Electric Car rental:** David's new electric car is currently at the Lebanon Airport. Available for a day, a week, a month — probably virus-free after two weeks of not being used. A full charge will give a hundred miles. There are special chargers that can do a quick charge (20 minutes) in Bradford, White River Junction, Bedford NH on the way to Boston. David recommends the "PlugShare" app (<https://www.plugshare.com/>) as the most inclusive and easy to use. There are many charging options within 10 miles of Strafford. Can also plug in at home when the car is resting there.  
This car can be scheduled at the Turo website: <https://turo.com/us/en/>  
The Vermont goals say that we'd need 90,000 electric cars on our roads to meet the Paris Accord goals.  
Barbara asked about the possibility of a charging station in Strafford, but someone would need to invest in this; Green Mountain Power is apparently now offering to provide a 50-50 match with a \$40,000 grant for a charging station, but someone would need to come up with \$40,000 more.
5. **Susan Hodges: Legislative update**  
Tim Briglin told Susan that everything in the legislature is on hold till August. Climate bills passed in the House, but not yet in the Senate. It would be good for Tim Ashe, leader of the Senate (who is also running for Lieutenant Governor) to hear from people in support of passage of the House bills. Susan said that the Climate Action Group will meet next Monday and she will propose that they do a summary letter with numbers of the bills and their details that the Energy Committee can help circulate.
6. **Weatherization, Report from Doc:** In addition to working on the next WindowDressers project, Doc has been in touch with Kelly at Efficiency Vermont, who is the person who works with Do-It-Yourself rebates, and he says that she and Becca White can be very helpful. We can encourage people to familiarize themselves with Efficiency Vermont options, and the other resources outlined on the Vital Communities' ENERGY web pages: <https://vitalcommunities.org/energy/>
7. **Regional Energy Coordinator:** There will be a meeting on Thursday morning 10 am, which Doc plans to attend, along with Toni; Kevin will check with Toni Pippi to learn more about what's involved in being our town's liaison, in terms of scheduling and time commitment.
8. **Subcommittee reports:**
  - **Transportation** (David): Covered above in report on electric car.
  - **Buildings: Weatherization / Home heating / Efficiency** (Matt and Doc): Covered above in building code and weatherization reports.
  - **Distributed electrical generation / Renewables** (Kevin): There is a current option for people who want to join in a community solar venture, if they don't have an ideal site at their home: The White River Community Solar project is being organized by BALE in South Royalton There is only 50 kW left: BALE's website has a description: <https://www.balevt.org/>
  - **State legislators / Town officials and commissions** (Kevin, Susan): See report above.

— **Agriculture and forestry** (Gus and Barbara confirmed that they would be on this committee, possibly also Tii McLane, David Paganelli; we're still hoping to host a discussion about farm-based energy and carbon-sequestration issues with Shannon Varley, Amy Huyffer, and Earl Ransom, but we're moving into farmers' busiest season.

— **Education and communication** (Jim): Main activity right now is meeting minutes, but this could also include connections with other town energy committees and outreach to the schools, which we get through our present quarantine.

9. **Enhanced Energy Plan:** Doc continues to feel that we should ask the TRORC staff (Tori, new director) for advice on how to complete this process, and also look to the new Regional Energy Coordinator for assistance, once that position is filled.

10. **Town Office renovation:** Our committee needs a liaison for that process.

11. **WindowDressers update:** Doc

— Community workshop is tentatively scheduled for mid-October.

— Doc did a presentation at Vital Community's Local Energy Showcase, which is summarized at:

[vitalcommunities.org/energy/roundtable/](https://vitalcommunities.org/energy/roundtable/) and you can see his session at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvQ6715IWlg&feature=youtu.be>

— Survey: More than 50 responses from 120 participants. **ACTION ITEM:** Doc will share the results of this survey with an invitation to the Energy Committee's GoogleDrive.

— Efficiency Vermont: If you put in three WindowDressers inserts, you're eligible for a \$100 rebate

— Heather Bagley applied for \$1,500 in grant money for WindowDressers from New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (deadline was 3/15/20). Doc and Heather have a follow-up phone meeting with NEGEV on April 30.

Among the 125 volunteers for WindowDressers and 110 people who signed the Climate Emergency resolution, there are people engaged in these projects that could be drawn into Energy Committee work.

#### Other Business:

\* **Climate Action Group** update: **Susan** pointed out that we need to articulate a vision of what our society will look like after the pandemic subsides. We could begin collecting ideas and proposals and observations from this time of quarantine. We also need to communicate to our state and national legislators that we must not forget about climate change while focusing on the pandemic. We need to effectively describe how we want life to look when this is over.

\*Kevin shared a link to a **Saturday Night Live skit about Zoom meetings:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3byTN8NTCkc&list=PLS\\_gQd8UB-hKbruovFC53YET\\_ApBG1zif&index=7&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3byTN8NTCkc&list=PLS_gQd8UB-hKbruovFC53YET_ApBG1zif&index=7&t=0s)

**Adjourned: 8:08 pm.** / Respectfully submitted by Jim Schley